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June 16, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) announced today that the St. James Parish Department of Human Resources has been awarded \$508,800 in federal funding through the Recovery Act (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009). The grant will boost funding for the Parish's YouthBuild Program, providing an estimated 50 additional young people in the community with job training and educational opportunities.

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"As we look to build a brighter future for Louisiana, we must tap into the energies and talents of our young people," said Congressman Melancon. "YouthBuild provides our at-risk youth with the education and employment skills they need to find meaningful work and become leaders in their communities. I am pleased Recovery Act funding will help St. James Parish create greater opportunities for our young people to succeed in life."

"We are certainly excited about the monies received as well as the success of our program," said Faye Washington, Executive Director of Department of Human Resources of St. James Parish. "The YouthBuild program is typically operated in urban areas, and since St. James has mostly a rural population, we faced many challenges. With the support of community partners both on the state and federal levels as well as support from Parish President Hymel, St. James' YouthBuild program has far surpassed our expectations."

St. James Parish YouthBuild provides job training and educational opportunities for at-risk youth ages 16-24 while they are constructing or rehabilitating affordable housing for low-income or homeless families in their own neighborhoods. Youth split their time between the construction site and the classroom, where they earn their GED or high school diploma, learn to be community leaders, and prepare for college and other postsecondary training opportunities. YouthBuild includes significant support systems, such as a mentoring, follow-up education, employment, and personal counseling services. In addition, the youth in the program also participate in community service and civic activities.

With the Recovery Act funding announced today, St. James Parish YouthBuild will also be able to provide weekly leadership training for the young people in the program.

YouthBuild is a nationwide program to provide disadvantaged youth with:

- the education and employment skills necessary to achieve economic self-sufficiency in occupations in high demand and postsecondary education and training opportunities;
- opportunities for meaningful work and service to their communities; and
- opportunities to develop employment and leadership skills and a commitment to community development among youth in low-income communities.

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